CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A high-speed mail processing system having a conveyor system for transferring mail pieces among two or more mail processing components and a controller for directing the operations of the components, the system comprising:

a postage computing device for calculating the postage value due for each mail piece;

a postage application printer positioned to print postage information on the mail pieces that are being moved by the conveyor system; and

a computer processing system for storing information related to the processing of each mail piece and for providing the controller with the processing information.

2.   The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a quality control unit for monitoring the postage value calculated by the postage computing device.

3.   The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a mail piece printer for printing documents that will be combined into the mail pieces.

4.   The system of claim 1 wherein the mail processing components include a folder and an inserter.

5.   The system of claim 1 wherein the controller and the computer processing system are the same device.

6.   The system of claim 1 wherein the controller, the computer processing system and the postage computing device are the same device.

7.   The system of claim 1 wherein the postage application printer is a high-speed ink jet printer.

8.   The system of claim 1 wherein the postage information printed by the postage application printer prints is Information-Based Indicia (IBI).

9.   The system of claim 1 wherein the postage application prints other information on one or more of the mail pieces in addition to the postage information.

10.   The system of claim 9 wherein the additional information includes one or more items selected from the group consisting of:

marketing information;

address information; and

an envelope border.

11.   A method for applying postage to mail pieces in a high-speed mail processing system comprising:

receiving processing instructions that identify how each mail piece should be processed;

controlling the components of the high-speed processing system to comply with the processing instructions;

calculating a postage value for each mail piece; and

printing the calculated postage value on each mail piece.

12.   The method of claim 11 further comprising:

folding the mail pieces;

inserting the mail pieces into an envelope; and

printing the calculated postage on each envelope.

13.   The method of claim 11 wherein a weight of each mail piece varies depending upon the number of pages included in each mail piece; and wherein the postage value for each mail piece is calculated based upon the number of pages included for that mail piece.

14.   The method of claim 11 wherein the postage value is calculated without weighing the mail pieces.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising:

printing other information on one or more of the mail pieces in addition to the postage value for that piece.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the other information includes one or more items selected from the group consisting of:

marketing information;

address information; and

an envelope border.

17. The method of claim 11 further comprising:

performing a quality control analysis on one or more of the calculated postage values.

18. The method of claim 12 further comprising:

printing documents to be included in each mail piece prior to folding the mail piece.

19. A system for processing mail pieces comprising:

means for receiving processing instructions that identify how each mail piece should be processed;

means for controlling the components of a high-speed processing system in accordance with the processing instructions;

means for calculating a postage value for each mail piece; and

a printer for printing the calculated postage value on each mail piece.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the printer is a high-speed printer that is capable of printing the postage value at any position or orientation on the mail pieces.

21. The system of claim 19 wherein the printer prints a unique postage value that has been individually calculated for each mail piece based upon the number of documents included in that mail piece.